

Winter 2002

Volume 1, Issue 1



Watershed News

Introducing...Watershed News

The Department of Environmental Management's Sustainable Watersheds Office is pleased to present the debut edition of Watershed News.

This quarterly publication is to inform, educate and inspire action in the state's watersheds.

Find us at: www.riwatersheds.org

Or Call: (401)222-3434

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What Is The Sustainable Watersheds Office?

THE SUSTAINABLE WATERSHEDS OFFICE HAS THREE OBJECTIVES:

1. To coordinate the Rhode Island Watershed Partnership
2. To encourage communities to plan for growth to achieve sustainable development
3. To promote the protection and restoration of natural and recreational resources.

The **RHODE ISLAND WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP (RIWP)** consists of organizations and agencies cooperating to protect, preserve and restore the State's environment on a watershed basis.

Teams are established to include all key stakeholders within a watershed—including those who live, work, and play within them—to identify the most important problems and to reach a consensus on how to comprehensively solve them.

RIDEM's Sustainable Watersheds Office plays a key role in this program by providing watershed coordinators for two watershed regions: *South County* and the *Northern Region*. These coordinators help prepare watershed action plans and coordinate implementation of the plans.

The Office also works to foster collaboration between DEM, other state and federal agencies, municipalities, non-profit organizations, and individuals to use existing resources more effectively.

PLANNING FOR GROWTH : The Office also assists communities to plan for growth—achieving more sustainable development or development that minimizes impacts to the environment and community character and preserves meaningful open space.

We are also assisting the *Governor's Growth Planning Council* in helping the State to encourage growth that is both economically and environmentally sound.

PROTECTION AND RESTORATION OF NATURAL, AND RECREATIONAL RESOURCES : The Office has been actively researching ways to preserve unfragmented forests by encouraging landowners to adopt innovative forest-based businesses.

The Office is also assisting communities to identify and map their important natural, cultural, and recreational resources and to establish, or restore, greenbelts along rivers and streams.

What's New

- Web-based watershed notification system. www.riwatersheds.org
- Web-based grant guide. www.state.ri.us/dem/programs/bpoladm/suswshed/grantgud/index.html
- Coordinated development and distribution of educational placemats and bookmarks.
- Coordinated watershed educational campaign in DEM parks.

Northern Region Watersheds Report

FREDERICK PRESLEY, WATERSHED COORDINATOR:

WOONASQUATUCKET RIVER WATERSHED HIGHLIGHTS:

WOONASQUATUCKET RIVER WATERSHED ACTION PLAN

Completed a plan of specific action necessary to meet short term objectives identified by the Watershed Team.

GREENSPACE PROTECTION AND IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

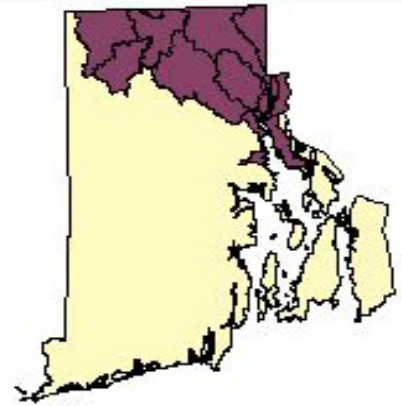
Development and implementation of a watershed-based Greenspace protection/restoration strategy for each municipality. Scheduled to start in March 2002.

SMITHFIELD DPW SITE STORMWATER CONTROL PROJECT

Follow-up to the salt shed project funded last year, this project will result in the installation of stormwater BMP's as well as a small riparian restoration. Project funded through 319 grant. Scheduled to begin Spring 2002.

Riparian Forest Buffer Development

Developed a watershed-based riparian forest buffer restoration strategy that identifies and ranks potential sites. The final report is now available. The Riverside Mills was designed as a demonstration site. Construction will begin this spring.



WOONASQUATUCKET RIVER REVUE

First annual fundraiser to build capacity for local watershed council. Event was coordinated with the assistance of the Sustainable Watersheds Office staff and interns.



Watershed supporters enjoy a night of art and music at the River Revue.



A Review Team examines a potential restoration site adjacent to the Woonasquatucket River as part of the riparian buffer project.

BLACKSTONE RIVER WATERSHED HIGHLIGHTS:

The Sustainable Watersheds Office expanded Watershed Partnership activities into the Blackstone in July 2001.

BLACKSTONE RIVER WATERSHED ACTION PLAN

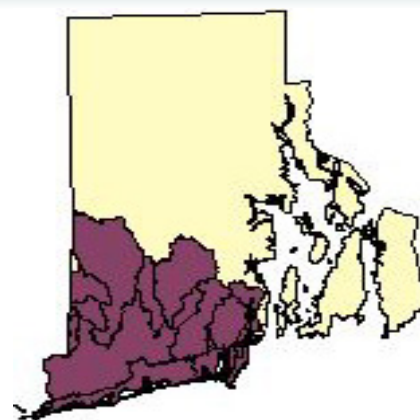
Working with the Blackstone Watershed Team to develop an action plan for this watershed. Scheduled completion date Spring 2002. We have begun the process to combine RI action plan with the MA action plan for first bi-state watershed action plan.

BLACKSTONE HAUNTED RIVER TOURS

The Sustainable Watersheds Office and Strategic Planning and Policy staff participated in the Blackstone Haunted River Tours to raise awareness of the River.

South County Watersheds Report

JEFF NIELD, WATERSHED COORDINATOR



SOUTH COUNTY WATERSHEDS ACTION PLANS

Watershed have been created for each of the watersheds in South County: Narrow River Watershed, Pawcatuck River Watershed, Saugatucket River Watershed and the Salt Ponds Region. The action plans identify priority issues for each watershed, specific implementation activities and who is responsible for implementation.

WATERSHED ACTION TEAMS

Since the creation of the Watershed Action PLANS, several watershed action teams have been coordinated with the assistance of the RIDEM Sustainable Watershed Office. Action teams are made up of individuals that represent local, state and federal concerns in solving specific watershed issues.

The action teams and topics, by watershed, include:

- Pawcatuck Watershed – Riparian Protection and Access Improvement; Water Quality Monitoring.
- Narrow River Watershed – TMDL Implementation/ Stormwater Management.
- Salt Ponds - Water Quality Monitoring.
- Saugatucket River – Stormwater Management.

PAWCATUCK WATERSHED WATER USE STAKEHOLDERS GROUP

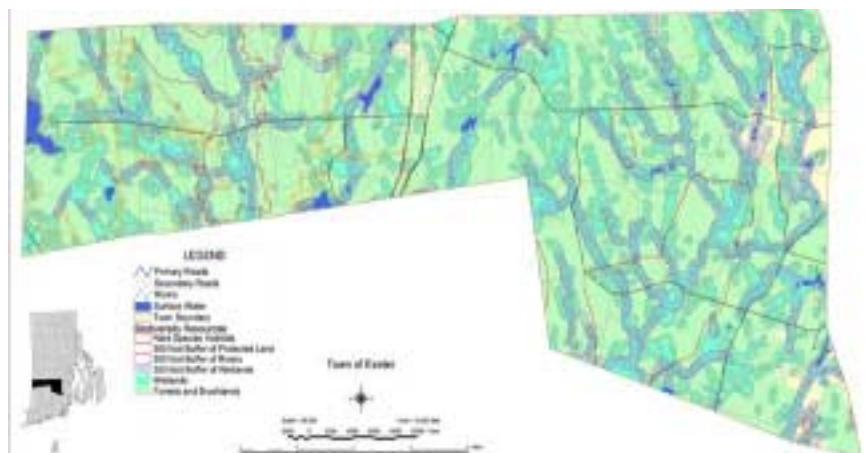
Serves as an action/technical team for water resource issues in the Pawcatuck Watershed. Presently, the WUSG advises on three major projects involving a water availability study of the watershed, a hydrologic modeling study of the Queens River Watershed and a water use optimization model for the watershed. The WUSG is in the process of self-evaluation and is working on a Lessons Learned to review its process to date.

SOUTH COUNTY GREENSPACE PROJECT

The South County Greenspace Project was designed to help towns identify and map their important natural, cultural, and recreational resources and to link these throughout their town and watershed. An Implementation Strategy is being drafted. It consists of town and regional maps depicting natural, cultural and recreational resource protection priorities and recommendations for actions to local and state agencies and organizations. A final project meeting will be held on April 3, 2002 at URI-Kingston Library's Galanti Lounge (6 to 8 p.m.).

COORDINATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING OF REGIONAL EFFORTS

RIDEM Sustainable Watershed Office continues to support regional planning efforts like the Washington County Regional Planning Council (WCRPC) and the Washington County Land Trust Coalition. Presently, the Office is working with the WCRPC's Executive Director to bring together all the planners each of the towns in Washington County to discuss regional efforts such as the South County Greenspace Project.



Maps such as this Critical Lands Inventory for Exeter will be provided to each town involved in the Greenspace Project by The Environmental Data Center at URI.

Planning for Growth/Sustainable Development Update

SCOTT MILLAR, SUSTAINABLE WATERSHEDS OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR

PETER HANLON, ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNER

GOVERNOR'S GROWTH PLANNING COUNCIL:

Prepared a report for the Growth Center Subcommittee to explore the feasibility of encouraging the community identification of growth centers to encourage compact growth. Designated growth centers would receive priority for state discretionary funding sources.

Drafted a report for the Compact Growth Subcommittee to determine the issues to resolve for developing new public water supply systems to serve compact growth systems.

Assisted with preparation of Annual Report for the Council. <http://www.planning.state.ri.us/gpc/default.htm>.

URBAN ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN MANUAL:

Initiated development of the R.I. Urban Environmental Design Manual. This project will promote environmentally responsible urban revitalization and infill development in the form of a comprehensive guide for local officials, community groups, residents, and the development community.

SOUTH COUNTY TECHNICAL PLANNING ASSISTANCE PROJECT

Completed the South County Planning Assistance Project, which includes four separate reports and a web-based assessment guide. The four reports are: the South County Design Manual, Model Land Use Ordinances, Rapid Site Assessment Guide and Farm and Forest Protection Strategies.

The purpose of the project is to assist communities to more effectively plan for and accommodate growth that minimizes impacts to the environment and community character. This project was recognized by the National Governor's Association as being one of the best of its kind in the country.

You can access the Project at <http://www.state.ri.us/dem/programs/bpoladm/suswshed/sctpap.htm>.

CONSERVATION DEVELOPMENT GUIDANCE MANUAL:

Preparing a manual of guidelines to assist communities and developers to understand and implement successful conservation development and to minimize impacts to the environment and community character.

The draft manual will be available for review in late March.

Zoning Amendment:

Prepared a proposed amendment that would give cities and towns a fourth option for the preservation of open space as part of a cluster development; private landowners would now be allowed to retain ownership of a portion of their property in an underdeveloped state, while the remainder of the property would be developed.

A conservation easement, held either by the city/town or non-profit organization, would be required to prevent the open space portion of the cluster development from being developed in the future.

Natural and Recreational Resources

GREGG J. CASSIDY, ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNER

Approximately 55 percent of Rhode Island is forested, however this resource is being lost and fragmented by intense development pressure. The difficulty of managing small parcels of land and the long-term nature of forest management has increased interest in alternatives, such as edible and medicinal products, decorative products, and recreational uses.

These enterprises may provide new ways for landowners to generate income—at least enough to pay property taxes—and may have a potential to develop into a small business appropriate for rural areas.

The Sustainable Watersheds Office recently obtained a

grant from the USDA Forest Service and, in collaboration with the Rural Lands Coalition, developed publications, a website, and a series of workshops to educate forest landowners about potential opportunities.

The link to the website is <http://www.state.ri.us/dem/programs/bpoladm/stratpp/forprod/forstprd.htm>.

The Office is actively seeking additional funding to expand the list of topics covered and to offer challenge grants to landowners to provide a portion of the capital needed to initiate forest-based businesses.



Bud McAllister of Burrillville started growing oyster mushrooms after attending one of our workshops.